Bishops must realize seriousness of abuse crisis, Pope Francis says

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT FROM PANAMA (CNS)—The primary goal of the Vatican’s February summit on clerical sexual abuse and child protection is to help bishops understand the urgency of the crisis, Pope Francis said.

During a news conference with journalists on Jan. 27 on his flight to Rome from Panama, the pope said the presidents of the world’s bishops’ conferences have been called to the Feb. 21-24 meeting at the Vatican to be “made aware of the tragedy” of those abused by members of the clergy.

“I regularly meet with people who have been abused. I remember one person—40 years old—who was unable to pray,” he said. “It is terrible, the suffering is terrible. So first, they [the bishops] need to be made aware of this.”

The pope’s International Council of Cardinals suggested the summit after realizing that some bishops did not know how to address or handle the crisis on their own, he said.

“We felt the responsibility of giving a ‘catechesis’ on this problem to the bishops’ conferences,” he said. “That is why we convoked the presidents” of the conferences, the heads of the Eastern Catholic Churches and representatives of the leadership groups of men’s and women’s religious orders.

The meeting, he said, will address “in a clear way” what protocols bishops need to follow when handling sexual abuse.

Asked about the expectations for the meeting, especially the expectations of Catholics who have grown frustrated with repeated reports of abuse and cover-up by some bishops, the pope said people need to realize “the problem of abuse will continue.”

“It is a human problem, a human problem [that is] everywhere,” he said. But if the Church becomes more aware of the tragedy of sexual abuse, the pope

Be engaged in world now to ensure better tomorrow, Holy Father encourages World Youth Day pilgrims

PANAMA CITY (CNS)—In the early morning hours, pilgrims were awakened by sounds of upbeat music as the hot Panamanian sun rose. Despite the heat, the pilgrims danced and sang along, awaiting Pope Francis’ arrival.

In his homily at the closing Mass for World Youth Day, Jan. 27, Pope Francis encouraged young Catholics to be engaged in the world today to ensure a better tomorrow.

“You, dear young people, are not the future but the now of God. He invites you and calls you in your communities and cities to go out and find your grandparents, your elders, to stand up and with them to speak out and realize the dream that the Lord has dreamed for you,” he said.

Pilgrims cheer before Pope Francis’ celebration of Mass for World Youth Day pilgrims at St. John Paul II Field in Panama City on Jan. 27. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)
said, it can help others face the crisis of abuse, especially in families “where shame leads to covering up everything.”

Speaking with journalists for nearly an hour, the pope was asked whether he would consider a general acceptance of married men into the Latin rite in a way similar to the practice of the Eastern Catholic Churches.

“In the Eastern rite, they can do it. They make the choice between celibacy or marriage before they’re ordained into the diaconate,” he explained. “When it comes to the Latin rite, a phrase said by St. Paul VI comes to mind: ‘I would rather give my life than change the law on celibacy.’”

The pope said he personally believes that “celibacy is gift to the Church,” and that while the prospect of married priests could be good, it could also create challenges for men who lack priests, he did not agree “with allowing optional celibacy.”

“My decision is no optional celibacy,” the pope said. “I will not do this. I don’t feel like I could stand before God with this decision.”

Pope Francis also was asked about his response to the political crisis in Venezuela as well as a seemingly neutral stance despite widespread belief that the election giving a second term to President Nicolas Maduro was rigged.

Earlier in the day, while visiting a Catholic-run hospice in Panama, the pope prayed for the people of Venezuela and expressed his hope that a “just and peaceful solution may be sought and expressed his hope that a “just and peaceful solution may be sought and achieved to overcome the crisis.”

Official Appointment

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“...because I want to be assured that close and real, and much less that he would ever have a lack of love in a practical way? May your ‘yes’ continue to be the gateway for the Holy Spirit to give us a new Pentecost for the world and for the Church,” the pope said.

Lubbers, speaking to the world’s young people in 2022 for the next World Youth Day,

The announcement of Portugal was made by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, head of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Laity, the Family, and Life, at the Legislative Assembly for the World Youth Day officials confirmed the year and city.

Upon hearing the location of the next celebration, Portuguese erupted in cheers, waving their country’s flag and chanting “We are the pope’s youth!”

Pope Francis then greeted Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who attended the Mass.

Pope Francis’ prayer intention for February

Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

February 3 – 19, 2019

POPE continued from page 1

Although the United States and several European countries have recognized National Assembly President Juan Guaido as the country’s legitimate head of state, the Vatican has not.

Pope Francis told journalists that while he fully supports the suffering people of Venezuela, picking a side in the crisis “would be pastoral imprudence on my part and would cause damage.”

“That is why I had to be—I don’t like the word ‘balanced’—I must be a shepherd to all and if they need help, then they must come to an agreement and ask for it,” he said.

The pope said that he thought carefully about his words to the people of the country because “I suffer for what is happening in Venezuela in this moment.”

“What is it that scares me? Bloodshed,” the pope said. “And that is why I ask for generosity from those who can help resolve the problem.”

Pope Francis also addressed the issue of abortion, which is among the themes of the Via Crucis at World Youth Day on Jan. 25.

During the 14th Station—Jesus is laid in his tomb—a young pilgrim read a reflection on all the tombs where those who have died violently deaths have been laid.” However, the reflection said, “there is one tomb that cries to heaven and denounces the terrible cruelty of humanity: it is the tomb that opens in the wombs of mothers who rip out innocent life.”

Asked how the words could be heard in harmony with his calls for mercy, including for women who have had abortions, Pope Francis said the message of mercy is for everyone, including the human being that is gestating.

Forgiving women who have had abortions is not the problem, he said. Rather, it is learning to accompany women who have understood and regret what they have done.

People do not understand the trauma women go through after an abortion, the pope said. Often those who regret their abortions “feel the need to reconcile and rejoin their child.”

“I tell them. ‘Your child is in heaven, talk to him, sing them the lullaby you were never able to sing to them,’” Pope Francis said. “There, a path of reconciliation can be found between mother and child. Forgiveness with God is already there. God always forgives.”

PILGRIMS continued from page 1

The pope reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St. Luke in which Jesus begins his public ministry by proclaiming in a synagogue that “this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Prescribing the Good News of God’s promise to free captives and the oppressed was an important moment in Jesus’ life, the pope said.

Nevertheless, he continued, many of those in the synagogue were incredulous and not prepared “to believe in something they knew and had seen grow up.”

“The same thing can also happen with us. We do not always believe that God can be that concrete and commonplace, that close and real, and much less that he can become so present and work through somebody like a neighbor, a friend, a relative,” the pope said.

Young people, he warned, risk looking at their mission, vocation and even their lives as something far off in the future and

“having nothing to do with the present,” while others can fall into the trap of inventing a “hygienically sealed future without consequence where everything is safe, secure and ‘well insured’.”

“The Lord and his mission are not a ‘meantime’ in our life, something temporary. They are our life,” Pope Francis said. “Do you want to live out your love in a practical way? May your ‘yes’ continue to be the gateway for the Holy Spirit to give us a new Pentecost for the world and for the Church.”

**The Criterion**

**NEWS FROM YOU!**

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**Reflection at Our Lady of Fatima**

**North Deanery Catechists’ Evening**

Feb. 7 – 10 a.m.
Annual Scout Awards Ceremony at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis
Feb. 7 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team Meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis
Feb. 7 – 5:30 p.m.
Celebrating Catholic School Values Dinner at Crowne Plaza, Indianapolis
Feb. 10 – 2 p.m.
Marriage Day Celebration Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral
Feb. 11 – 6:30 p.m.
North Deanery Catechists’ Evening Reflection at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis

**Reflection at the Latin Rite**

Feb. 3 – 2 p.m.
Amual Scout Awards Ceremony at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis
Feb. 14 – 8 a.m.
Judicatures Meeting at Indiana Interchurch Center, Indianapolis
Feb. 14 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team Meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center
Feb. 16 – 11 a.m.
Confirmation for youths from the Batesville Deanery, churches of St. Mary, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Maurice and St. John the Baptist at St. Mary Church, Greenburg
Feb. 19 – 1:30 p.m.
Mass with students and staff of the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception, in Sisters of St. Francis Chapel, Oldenburg

(Schedule subject to change.)

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- Page 2

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(Schedule subject to change.)
Panel hears testimony on reform of payday lending industry

By Victoria Arthur

One by one, they described the devastation that the payday lending industry has inflicted on the most vulnerable people in Indiana.

They represented churches, veterans’ groups, social service organizations and community coalitions from across the state. And when they met as the Indiana Statehouse last week, these advocates were united around one goal: supporting Senate Bill 104, which would place limits on the payday lending industry that charge consumers an annual percentage rate (APR) of up to 391 percent on the short-term loans they offer.

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) supports the bill, which would cap the interest rate and fees that a payday lender may charge to 36 percent APR, in line with 15 other states and the District of Columbia. Among those called to testify during the more than three-hour Senate committee hearing on the bill was Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

“Lending practices that either intentionally or unintentionally take unfair advantage of one’s desperate circumstances are unjust and violate moral principles,” Tebbe said during the Jan. 23 hearing. “We cannot continue to allow forms of predatory lending to exploit the poor and vulnerable among us.”

Pope Francis invites young people to join global prayer network online

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis helped launch a new mobile app and online platform connecting people around the world in prayer.

The pope presented “the official platform of the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network: Click To Pray,” on Jan. 20 prior to praying the Angelus with visitors gathered in St. Peter’s Square.

Joined by Jesuit Father Frederic Fornos, who helped the international prayer network, holding a tablet displaying the platform, the pope said it would be “here that I add my intentions and prayer requests for the Church’s mission.”

The prayer network, formerly called the Apostleship of Prayer, is a Jesuit-run outreach that has given Catholics the pope’s monthly prayer intentions since 1890. The global prayer network started offering the prayer intentions on video over social media in 2016.

“I have found HOPE in the GOODNESS of the Church. When you support the United Catholic Appeal, you’re helping people like me. THANK YOU for being an answer to my prayers.”

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Macey characterized the industry’s business model as having a “perverse incentive” to target the working poor. She explained that payday lenders are allowed direct access to a borrower’s checking account as security for the loan, and they know the date that a borrower will receive their next paycheck to pay off the loan and, upon default, they will assume aggressive collection tactics and damaged credit. “This will lead to barriers to jobs, housing and other affordable [loan] products in the future.”

The payday loan industry would be “effectively eliminated” by passage of Senate Bill 104, Macey said. But she and other supporters of the bill emphasized that there are many alternatives for needy individuals and families, and that in states that have enacted similar bans on payday loans, most consumers do not miss them.

Steve Hoffman, president and CEO of Brightpoint, a community action agency serving northern Indiana, described how his organization offers loans of up to $1,000 at 21 percent APR. The monthly payment on the maximum loan is $92.

“That is a key figure, because families that are in financial distress are not suddenly going to be able to repay a payday loan in two weeks,” Hoffman said. “They get caught in a trap, and they get out of this trap by getting help—from family, friends, churches, and organizations like my own. This bill is important for all Hoosiers. Polling shows that 90 percent of Hoosiers, both Republicans and Democrats, want a 36 percent rate cap. More than nine out of 10 of our low-income families at Brightpoint say they never want to use these loans again. Public opinion doesn’t come much stronger than that.”

But a handful of opponents—all lobbyists representing the payday loan industry—spoke out against the bill. Presenting on behalf of Check Into Cash, an Indiana-based payday lender, Pat Hoffman said that eradicating the industry would not solve the dilemma of people in financial distress needing quick access to money. He also emphasized that the payday loan industry is regulated, and that in the absence of that option, consumers often turn to unregulated loan sources—such as Internet lenders—with even higher fees.

“You have to look at the laboratory of the marketplace,” Burdick said. “Several states have passed these bills, and the payday lending industry has effectively left those states. That did not solve in any capacity the demand for those loans. In fact, in those communities people went to online lenders, the ‘tribal’ lenders, the guy you see out in the parking lot. In Oregon, when a similar bill passed, consumer complaints against unregulated Internet lenders doubled. But that is where the market goes.”

In concluding the lengthy hearing, Sen. Eric Bassler (R-Washington), chairman of the committee, stated that the status quo regarding the payday industry cannot remain indefinitely.

“I would challenge both sides on this issue to figure out a good, appropriate and just solution,” Bassler said.

No further hearing or vote on the bill has been scheduled to date.

To follow Senate Bill 104 and other priority legislation of the Indiana Catholic Conference, visit www.indianacc.org.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachi Parish in Brownsburg, is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

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During the course of pregnancy, receiving an accurate prenatal diagnosis can be a tremendously joyous experience for parents. In severe cases, physicians may tell parents that their child has a condition that is "incompatible with life." While some children with this unfortunate diagnosis still receive helpful treatments and manage to live or even thrive for years, in other cases, no realistic treatment options exist and they may live only a matter of minutes or hours following their birth, particularly when they are born with severely damaged or lethal vital organs. Sometimes it is preferable to refer to the situation as one in which the unborn child is "affected by a terminal condition." Prior to the development of prenatal screening technologies and genetic testing, doctors who performed stillbirth or terminally ill babies would often shunt them away from their mothers to die, leaving the parents and family without a sense of closure or resolution. These losses were basically viewed and treated as "non-events," and the emotions and grief experienced by the family related to all forms of perinatal loss, whether from miscarriage, stillbirth, newborn or death in a hospice. The prenatal diagnosis of a lethal anomaly creates a challenging and unusual situation for families when they are informed of their baby’s terminal condition weeks—or even months—before their child’s death. What was once a surprise miscarriage or a surprise loss after birth becomes an anticipated and foreseeable event. In the wake of the diagnosis, medical professionals will sometimes recommend and pressure parents to abort their unborn child. This unsatisfactory choice often relegates them to never reaching meaningful closure with respect to the difficult pregnancy they have traversed. It also tempts them to act contrary to every protective parental instinct they have, and deny the reality of their newest family member, as if he or she can simply disappear through the termination. Many hospitals and obstetrics programs, however, are now offering an improved alternative known as "perinatal hospice." This approach seeks to set up a particular supportive environment within the hospital or another setting in which all the members of the family can receive the child following delivery, hold and name the newborn, and fully acknowledge him or her brief but meaningful life.

Perinatal hospice support staff will typically explain what the pregnancy was like, and family would like to see, happen, and try to tailor the experience accordingly. Families are often grateful that their religious leaders rose to the room. They can make arrangements for baptism. They can take a mold of their infant's face, or make a clay footprint or a tiny skull from microsculpt by the staff. The family can arrange for a small winter's cap to cover the child's head if the family prefers. They can sing lullabies and pray together. Perinatal hospice staff remain nearby and available to provide emotional support or pain medication for a baby who appears uncomfortable, even as the child may show a wide breath of life and pass on. In some cases, infants will have conditions that are not immediately fatal, and may be able to go home to be with family with a few days or weeks before passing on. Hospice care continues during the postpartum period, with ongoing input and support from the neonatal team.

Drs. Nathan Hoeklid and Byron Callahan, two pioneers in the cold field of perinatal hospice, sum up this supportive and consoling form of care this way: "Perinatal hospice offers in itself, though not necessarily in kind, from other modes of perinatal health care. It focuses on the prenatally invaded, rather than on the infant's immediate physical pathology, and places the family in the central arena of care. It provides a compassionate and consoling response from the time of diagnosis until death and beyond. It is marked by a cognizance that 'dying' is a natural part of life for all fetuses; [and that] significant relationships are disrupted and familial bonds are severed. Hospice care provides a model of medical and interpersonal outreach, one that hopefully will continue to expand in the context of modern neonatal care."

Letters Policy
Letters from readers are welcome and are given preference over letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informative, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic courtesy and respect. The editors reserve the right to select the letters that are published and edit letters from readers as necessary based on space and quality. Letters of 300 words or less, which include names and addresses but no specific personal identity information, are always considered and printed. Letters and e-mails to Letters to the Editor, The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with questions or comments may reach the editorial team at letters@archindy.org.

Carole Tessier, left, rides with her birth mother Margaret Teece Nagella to the March for Life in Washington on Jan. 18. Tessier met her birth mother for the first time almost a year ago. A few weeks after abortion became legal in the United States on Jan. 22, 1973, Nagella, then 18, realized she was pregnant with Tessier. The oldest Catholic family line from Rome, Ohio, she knew from the beginning that she would carry her child to term and find an adoptive family. (CNS photo/Zoey Maraist, Arlington Catholic Herald)
El niño Jesús es consagrado a su Padre

“Embelluce tu tono, Sión, y recibe a Cristo Rey. Abrazú a María, la puerta del cielo, pues ella conduce al Rey de la gloria revestido de nuestra luz. Permanece Virgen llevando en sus manos al Hijo nacido antes del lucero del alba. Simeón lo tomó en sus brazos y proclamó ante los pueblos que el Señor de la vida y de la muerte y Salvador del mundo.”

(Antífona tradicional de la Fiesta de la presentación del Señor)

Mañana, 2 de febrero, es la Fiesta de la Presentación del Señor en la que recordamos el día en que María y José, quienes eran judíos devotos, acogieron activamente los ritos de su tradición de fe y humildemente cumplieron con su obligación de consagrar a su hijo recién nacido al Señor. Por supuesto, sabemos que no era necesario devolver a este niño al Señor porque él era el Señor, y su existencia era en sí misma una forma de oblation o de “retribuir” al Padre celestial.

Del mismo modo, la ley judía exigía que la madre del niño fuera purificada mediante un ritual. María no necesitaba esto. Ya era pura y sin mancha en virtud de su immaculada concepción, un don de la gracia de Dios que le permitió convertirse en la nueva Eva, la madre de todos los vivos.

El cumplimiento de la ley, que llamamos la Presentación del Señor, se realizó no por necesidad sino como un acto simbólico cuyo objetivo era transmitir tres mensajes: 1) que este recién nacido, proclamado por los anfiteatros celestiales como el salvador de la humanidad, no había venido a abolir la ley sino a hacer cumplir, 2) María, la nueva Eva, forma parte de la gloria de su hijo, pero también comparte con él su “otra oblation, perfecta y única, la de la Cruz” (Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica, #529); y 3) todos nosotros, hijos de Dios, estamos consagrados al Señor por intercesión de María nuestra madre.

Tradicionalmente en esta fiesta la Iglesia nos invita a bendecir las velas que se usarán a lo largo del año litúrgico. Cuando esta bendición solemne va acompañada de una procesión a la iglesia, la congregación canta: “Luz para iluminar a las naciones paganas y gloria de tu pueblo Israel,” segundo del cántico de Simeón: “Ahora, Señor, puedes dejar que tu servicio mueras en paz, como lo has prometido” (cf., Lk 2:22-40). Estas aclamaciones nos conectan con los dos de las principales temas de la versión de la Navidad según san Lucas: La salvación de Dios es para todos y la profecía de Simeón con respecto a la espada que atravesará el corazón de María. Estos eventos nos presentan una verdadera lección de humildad. Por un lado, el relato es bastante sencillo: una joven familia lleva a su primogénito al templo y, según lo prescribe la ley, lo consagran al Señor y le ofrecen sacrificios.

Por otro lado, se trata de una historia compleja, compuesta de muchas capas y rica en simbolismo y sabiduría profética. Simeón y Ana son personas comunes, de edad avanzada y listas para regresar a su hogar celestial, pero ellos también son más de lo que parecen.

Ambos son profetas, lo que significa que Dios los ha llamado a dar testimonio del extraordinario milagro que producirá la salvación de todo el pueblo de Dios, judíos y paganos por igual. Dios les ha dado el don de la profecía. Pueden ver lo que otros no y no dudan en hablar de lo que han visto a “todos los que esperaban la redención de Jerusalén” (Lk 2:38).

En virtud de nuestra bautismo, nosotros hemos recibido también el don que recibieron Ana y Simeón el día en que Jesús fue consagrado al Señor en el Templo. Nosotros también somos testigos de la luz de Cristo y a través de nuestras palabras y ejemplos estamos llamados a dar testimonio de la salvación que nos pertenece por la misericordia y la bondad de Dios. Las velas que bendeciremos mañana son signos sacramentales de la luz Cristi, la luz de Cristo, que se encuentra a disposición de todos sin distinción de religión, raza, sexo o estatus socioeconómico.

Tal como nos lo recuerda el papa Francisco, estamos llamados a ser discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo. Al igual que Simeón y Ana, nuestra vocación es dar gracias a Dios y compartir la Buena Noticia de nuestra salvación con todos (incluyendo familiares, amigos, compañeros de trabajo, vecinos, extranjeros y enemigos).

Estamos llamados a ser velas vivas cuya llama brilla intensamente con la luz de Cristo y que se renueva todos los días mediante la gracia de Dios que sentimos en la oración, los sacramentos y nuestra comunión con otros discípulos misioneros en la Iglesia. Que la luz de Cristo brille en nuestros corazones como un fuego especial mañana mientras damos gracias a Dios por el don de nuestra salvación. †
February 5
Mission 27 Resale, 132 Leota St., Indianapolis. Senior Discount Day, every Tuesday, 30 percent off clothing. 5 a.m.-6 p.m., ministry supports Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society Food Pantry and Changing Lives Forever program. Information: 317-667-8260.

February 6
Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: 317-407-6881.

February 8
St. John the Evangelist Parish (Pam Am Plaza Building parish hall), 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. Pro-Life Film Series, viewing of the documentary Bbling Fertility, followed by panel discussion, sponsored by St. John the Evangelist and Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary parishes in Indianapolis, light supper served, free will offerings accepted. Information: Sheryl Dye, undye1@gmail.com. 317-407-6881.

February 9

February 10
St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 4625 N. Kenwood Ave., Indianapolis. Mass in French, 12:30 p.m. Information: 317-627-7729 or ncf@stt040@gmail.com.

February 10-17
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, 5333 E. Washington St., Indianapolis. 8-Day Festival of Prayer, Sun. 10 a.m. Mass and Girl Scouts’ World Thinking Day; Mon. 6-7:30 p.m. Annointing of the Sick and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; Tues. 10-3 p.m. Mosaics, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6396.

February 11

February 12
Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Monthly Taizé Prayer Service, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Information: 812-535-2992, mprovctz@archindy.org.

February 13
Church of the Immaculate Conception, Bloomingom, 803 N. Monroe St., Bloomington. Valentine Open House, tours, activities for children, refreshments, 6-8 p.m. Information: 812-332-1262 or Cheryl Bush, cbush@archindy.org.

February 15
St. Meinrad Archabbey, Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. Beyond First Impressions: A Couples Retreat, Benedictine Father Noel Muller, presenter. $425, couples required in attendance. Information: 812-357-6655 or mrevchi@steinsimard.org.

February 16
Mount St. Francis Center for Spiritualities, 301 Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. “Marriage in Christ” Day of Reflection for Married Couples. Information: 812-923-8817, or mtfspiritualitycenter@ archindy.org. (case sensitive).

February 22
Mount St. Francis Center for Spiritualities, 301 Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. Ministrations of the Sick and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; Fri. 7:30 a.m. Mass, 7 p.m. concert; Wed. 8:35 a.m. Mass and rosary; Thurs. 12:15, 7 p.m. Mass; Fri. 7:30 a.m. rosary, 8:15 a.m. Mass, 1:45 p.m. Living Rosary presented by school children; Sat. 5 p.m. Mass; Sun. 10 a.m. Mass, 11:30 a.m. Feast and Faith presentation on Jesuit Spirituality. Information: 317-356-7291 or www.archindy.org.

March 2

March 6
St. John the Evangelist Parish (Pam Am Plaza Building parish hall), 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. Pro-Life Film Series, viewing of the documentary Bbling Fertility, followed by panel discussion, sponsored by St. John the Evangelist and Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary parishes in Indianapolis, light supper served, free will offerings accepted. Information: Sheryl Dye, undye1@gmail.com. 317-407-6881.

March 9
St. Therese of the Infant Jesus Catholic Church, St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 5200 E. 38th St., Indianapolis. World Thinking Day; Mass and Girl Scouts’ World Thinking Day; Prayer Service, 7-8 p.m., simple music, silence. Information: 812-535-2992, mprovctz@archindy.org.

March 30
St. Joseph Parish, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Vigil Mass, reconciliation, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., includes Sunday Vigil Mass, reconciliation, lunch and dinner. 75 per couple. Information and registration: 812-923-8817, or mtfspiritualitycenter@ archindy.org. (case sensitive).

April 27
Mount St. Francis Center for Spiritualities, 301 Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. Easter Celebration Concert, featuring St. Bartholomew Choir, Brass and Choir. Information: 317-658-8244 or mprovctz@steinsimard.org.

May 24
St. Meinrad Archabbey, Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. Beyond First Impressions: A Couples Retreat, Benedictine Father Noel Muller, presenter. $425, couples required in attendance. Information: 812-357-6655 or mrevchi@steinsimard.org.

May 26
Mount St. Francis Center for Spiritualities, 301 Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. “Marriage in Christ” Day of Reflection for Married Couples. Information: 812-923-8817, or mtfspiritualitycenter@ archindy.org. (case sensitive).

Two Retrouvaille retreats for marriages in crisis planned in February
Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue, or have you stopped talking to each other? Do you wonder whether your marriage might end? Consider attending one of two Retrouvaille retreats for marriages in crisis that will take place near central and southern Indiana in February. Retrouvaille (pronounced REH-tro-vai) is a worldwide program that offers tools needed for hurting couples to rediscover a loving marriage relationship. For more than 30 years, the program has helped hundreds of thousands of couples heal their damaged relationships. The main emphasis of the program is on communication in marriage between husband and wife. It gives spouses the opportunity to rediscover each other and examine their lives together in a new and positive way.

Information for the upcoming retreats is as follows:
- Feb. 15-17 in Lebanon, Ky. Location disclosed with confirmation of registration. Information and registration: 812-947-3302 or email 317/203@retrouvaille.org. Sponsored by Retrouvaille of Lebanon.
- Feb. 7-9 in Evansville, Ind. (case sensitive). For more information call 812-437-3302 or email bminut@stbparish.net, or go to bit.ly/2RQA5P0 (case sensitive). †
Church leaders call Philippine church attack ‘heinous and evil’

MANILA, Philippines (CNS) -- Church leaders condemned bomb explosions that killed at least 20 people and injured about 100 others inside a Catholic church in the southern Philippines on Jan. 27. They called the attack a “heinous and evil” act of terrorism.

Ucanews.com reported the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the bombing, which occurred during Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the city of Jolo.

Islamic State, which often claims responsibility for acts of terrorism, issued a statement claiming two suicide bombers detonated explosive belts inside the church and near its entrance. Shortly after the first blast left bodies strewn on the floor amid destroyed pews, a second explosion near the entrance killed at least five soldiers trying to help the wounded.

The attack, one of the deadliest in recent years in Mindanao, occurred less than a week after a voters referendum was held on expanding and strengthening an existing Muslim autonomous region in the area.

The bishops’ conference condemned the attack and called on Christians “to join hands with all those peace-loving and indigenous communities in combating violent extremism.”

Pope Francis also expressed his sorrow over the attack.

“I raise my prayers for the dead and wounded,” the pope said in Panama, where he was attending the World Youth Day celebration.

“May the Lord, Prince of Peace, convert the hearts of the violent and give the inhabitants of that region a peaceful coexistence,” added the pope.

House members introduce bipartisan measure to ban abortions at 20 weeks

WASHINGTON (CNS)--U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-New Jersey, was joined by more than 100 other members of the House on Jan 24 in introducing the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act of 2019, a measure that would ban abortions after 20 weeks of gestation.

Smith, a Catholic, who is co-chairman of the House Pro-Life Caucus, is the lead sponsor of the bill, which cites research by more than 100 other members of the House on Jan 24 in introducing the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act of 2019, a measure that would ban abortions after 20 weeks of gestation.

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Smith, who also performed abortions on these babies, said “The majority of Americans—some 59 percent according to a recent poll—support legal protection for pain-capable unborn children.” Smith said in introducing the bill. He was referring to results of an annual poll of Americans’ views on abortion conducted by the Marist Poll at Marist College and sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. The poll also showed that 75 percent of respondents want “substantial” restrictions on abortion access even as more than half respondents describe themselves as pro-choice, Smith said in a statement supporting the bill.

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Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace, said U.S. bishops stand in solidarity and pray with the victims and “join the bishops of the Philippines in condemning such senseless acts of violence. We invite Catholics and all men and women of good will to do the same.”

Father Romeo Sancler, apostolic administrator of Jolo, said those who persisted “died for their Christian faith.”

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The predominantly Muslim province of Sulu has long been a hotbed of groups claiming allegiance to Islamic State and al-Qaida terrorist networks.

Authorities said the bombing was in retaliation for the death of a leader of the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group last year.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, military spokesman, said investigators had recovered closed-circuit footage of the bombers just before the attack.

Mujiv Hataman, governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, told ucanews.com only Abu Sayyaf, a small militant group associated with the Islamic State, had the means to carry out the attack.

The More Islamic Liberation Front, which entered into a peace deal with the government in 2014, said it would conduct its own investigation.

“We are not dividing people. In fact, we are uniting Muslim and Christian people,” said Hadji Murad Ibrahim, the group’s chairman.

The Philippine government vowed to hunt down the perpetrators.

“We will pursue to the ends of the Earth the ruthless perpetrators behind this dastardly crime,” said Salvador Panelo, presidential spokesman. “The law will give them no mercy.”

Congratualtions, St. Paul’s Hermitage!

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PRO-LIFE

continued from page 1

saw Archbishop Charles C. Thompson during the homily he delivered to about 900 people. “Both are necessary for a truly integrated commitment to missionary discipleship, and that’s what our march will be—a mission for the sanctity of life … from the moment of conception to natural death.”

Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind., and more than a dozen priests from both dioceses were concelebrants at the Mass. The two dioceses and Right to Life of Indianapolis sponsored the day’s events.

Archbishop Thompson prompted that “we must never lose proper perspective of uniting ourselves to the way of God rather than trying to conform God into our way of thinking. That’s when humanity loses its way. That’s when things start to break down in our society.”

He called to mind not just the babies aborted since 1973, “but also mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, society itself, the family” as victims to the culture of death.

He said society should rather cultivate a culture of life. Those embraced by such a culture should include “the immigrant, the refugee, those who may be on death row, or addicted, or abused.”

Ultimately, the archbishop said, “We know the outcome. … The cross gives way to the resurrection, and the saints go marching on with Jesus as the way, the truth and the life.”

When it came to literally marching, “I’ll be the first to admit, out in that cold air, it’s hard for me to exude joy,” he said, receiving a wave of laughter from the congregation. “But we’ll do this together,” he added.

“Where the rubber meets the road”

And so they did, the archbishop along with the crowd of adults, priests, religious, seminarians and students from 13 elementary schools, high schools and colleges from both sponsoring dioceses.

“The fact that so many, young and old, braved the weather in solidarity with the unborn is a testament to their commitment to upholding the sacredness of life ….” Archbishop Thompson told The Criterion.

This year’s route extended beyond last year’s inaugural march. The one-mile trek included the city’s main thoroughfare, Meridian Street, a portion of Monument Circle, and a three-quarter circuit around the Indiana Statehouse grounds.

The march ended at the south steps of the Statehouse. Inside, lawmakers were busy meeting and voting during the Indiana General Assembly. But several of them, along with others active in the pro-life movement, took time to address the cheering crowd.

The hourlong rally included 12 legislators and leaders speaking on behalf of pro-life institutions and organizations. Each of them, as well as Bishop Doherty in his opening prayer and emcee Marc Tuttle, president of Right to Life of Indianapolis, thanked the participants for braving the 22-degree wind chill.

“The Supreme Court makes all sorts of decisions in June. Why they couldn’t have made this [Roe v. Wade] decision in June, I don’t know” Tuttle quipped.

He explained why choosing to rally at the Statehouse steps was no random decision.

“We’re gathered here because ultimately abortion is a local issue,” said Tuttle. “Our gathering here, our work at pregnancy centers, our work for pro-life legislation, all of that trickles up to Washington D.C. And really that’s where the rubber meets the road, because for 46 years our pro-life efforts have been blocked by an unjust Supreme Court ruling in Roe v. Wade.”

When it came to literally marching, he introduced the more than a dozen pro-life lawmakers just to Washington, but also to the state’s Capitol.

“We’re blessed to live in a state that is one of the top 10 pro-life states because of our number of pro-life legislators,” he said. Among the many state legislators whom he introduced was Rep. Christy Stutzman of Elkhart County in northwestern Indiana. Even as a freshman lawmaker, she has already co-authored House Bill 1211 to ban dismemberment abortions.

She said each year when the solemn observance of Roe v. Wade comes around she is “reminded of how old I am. … Because you see, I was born in August of 1973, and I could’ve been legally aborted that year. It reminds me to speak up for my generation, 50 percent of which is not here because of this blight on our country.”

Stutzman implored the crowd to...
At a rally on the Statehouse steps following the Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis on Jan. 22, U.S. Sen. Todd Young of Indiana holds a microphone to a crowd of about 700 to catch their shouts after asking, "Do we love babies, Hoosiers?" (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson delivers a homily in St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Jan. 22 prior to the Indiana March for Life. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Swayze Liebel is an Indiana native and current resident. She lauded the state legislature for pro-life leadership, including a 2011 law defunding Planned Parenthood in the state that was partially blocked by federal courts, and a 2015 law mandating an ultrasound be performed at least 24 hours before an abortion. A legal challenge to the latter is awaiting a hearing by the Seventh Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

Another pro-life Indiana law is awaiting a possible hearing—by the U.S. Supreme Court. The 2016 law banning abortion based on gender, race and disability. It made Indiana "the first state in the country to call the abortion of babies because of their race or their sex or their disability 'discrimination,'" said Swayze Liebel.

"We're waiting any day" for the Supreme Court to decide whether or not to hear the case, she said, "and that will take a huge chunk out of Roe v. Wade and be its demise—from right here in Indiana!" The laws, the efforts in crisis pregnancy centers and on campuses, the support of women who choose life for their babies and the promotion of adoption, all are chipping away at legalized abortion, she said.

Despite the cold winter rain on Jan. 19, Greg Aldrich, a member of St. Patrick Parish in Terre Haute, stands as one of several pro-life advocates peacefully raising awareness of the impacts of abortion during Terre Haute's solemn Roe v. Wade observance in front of the Vigo County Courthouse. (Submitted photo by Tina McBroom)

"It's kind of like a house of cards," said Swayze Liebel. "You pull one out, and you pull another out, and sooner or later Roe v. Wade will just topple."
The invitation—and the emotional stories that followed—came shortly after their group boarded the bus for the long ride home to Indianapolis from the national March for Life in Washington on Jan. 18.

One of the adult chaperones on the Indianapolis North Deanery bus asked the 29 high school students if they wanted to come to the front and use the microphone to share their thoughts about their journey to stand up for the rights of the unborn.

When seconds passed, Mary Claire Cooke made her way from the back of the bus to take the microphone. First, she thanked her youth minister at Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis—Ann Collins—for organizing the trip and for inspiring her passion for being pro-life. Then the 18-year-old senior at Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis shared how this was her third trip to Washington for the March.

“I spoke about the feeling I get when I see so many people at the march—and how when I’m back home, it’s easy to get discouraged,” Mary Claire recalls. “But when I come to the event, I’m reminded that this—life—is the most important right you’re fighting for. And it’s inspiring to see all the people fighting for it, too.”

The emotional stories from other youths soon followed. “A lot of people in the group talked about knowing someone who had been touched by abortion,” Mary Claire says. “A couple of people had siblings who had abortions and regretted it—or thought about it and didn’t. They talked about how that baby could have died. And how that kid was their favorite person in their life right now. They couldn’t imagine not having that person in their life. ‘It was one of the most moving parts of the whole trip.’

‘I wanted to stand up for life’

The journey to the March for Life created similar lasting memories for the groups from across central and southern Indiana who traveled to Washington.

At 14, Michael Weissbord considers it an honor that he had the opportunity to help carry his school’s banner that proclaimed, “Behold: Children are a gift from the Lord.”

But what stood out to him even more was seeing “all these banners from different schools and different organizations across the country. There were hundreds of thousands of people there.”

“It made me feel like this was something way bigger than my school and my parish,” says Michael, who marched along the streets of Washington with about 50 of his fellow students from St. Nicholas School in Ripley County in southern Indiana. “I wanted to stand up for life and be part of something that unites everybody who wants abortion to be illegal. I’ve never taken part in something that big with mostly Catholic people. It made me know that there are a lot of Christians out there.”

Embracing the gift of life

At 17, Austin Jones has volunteered to help single mothers and families who struggle to provide the necessities of life for their children. “I’ve always felt strongly about pro-life movement,” says Austin, a member of the pro-life group at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. “Not just from my belief, but it’s been proven scientifically that a baby is human at conception.”

Austin was part of an Indianapolis South Deanery group of about 50 students who had a whirlwind, 36-hour travel experience to Washington—leaving the evening of Jan. 17 and returning in the early morning of Jan. 19. The group attended three Masses during that time.

According to statistics, 50% of marriages end in divorce.

Don’t be a Statistic, Find HOPE.
February 15-17, 2019

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The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:
- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
- Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
- CDU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church
- 25% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry

REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW
If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are many ways to make a report:
- Ethics Point
- Confidential, Online Reporting
  www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810
- Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis Victim Assistance Coordinator (317) 236-1548 or 800-382-9366, ext. 1548
caralahill@archindy.org

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The essence of the March

It was just before midnight on Wednesday, Jan. 16, when Carol Wagner boarded a bus with the 29 high school students and five other adults bound for Washington from the Indianapolis North Deanery.

A grandmother, Wagner knew the trip to the March for Life would be a challenging one physically, but her spirits soared at that moment because the group had just emerged from participating in eucharistic adoration at St. Lawrence Church in Indianapolis.

She was also buoyed by the opportunity to lead the students into a better understanding of their Catholic faith and a deeper relationship with God—the goal that has motivated her during her nine years of involvement in campus ministry at Bishop Chatard High School.

And that’s exactly what happened, she says, for the students who made the journey from the Indianapolis parishes of Christ the King, St. Lawrence, St. Matthew the Apostle and St. Luke the Evangelist.

Still, the most poignant moment for Wagner—a moment that was at the core of the march for her—came when some of the students saw families marching in the parade and then asked her about being a mother.

‘With tears in my eyes, I told them that the day our first child was born God told me it wasn’t about me anymore,” she says. “That was the day I became a mother. When I held my baby in my arms, it was no longer about me.”

Students McKenzie Liebel, left, and Savannah Mays of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis show their support for the pro-life movement during the March for Life in Washington on Jan. 18. (Submitted photo)

“It was a lot more people than I expected,” Austin says about the march. “There were even schools from Sydney, Australia. It shows that there is more than our country in this fight. It was a good experience to get our voices heard and to have our faith grow.”

Students McKenzie Liebel, left, and Savannah Mays of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis show their support for the pro-life movement during the March for Life in Washington on Jan. 18. (Submitted photo)
Homilies should focus on ‘message of the Scriptures for today’s world’

By Fr. Herbert Weber

There is very little that a priest does each week that requires so much attention as the Sunday homily. The homily can be a source of inspiration, or it can be a stumbling block for many in the congregation. For the one who prepares and delivers it, it may be a unique opportunity for strengthening the call to discipleship.

Like the proverbial person looking at a painting in a museum, people often don’t know a lot about homilies, but they know what they like. What they like can vary, thus causing even more challenge to the homilist. As a priest, I have discovered both the preparation and the delivery of each homily have to be taken seriously.

Every Tuesday morning, I lead a Bible study group right after the morning Mass. These days, about 30 or 35 people show up. We read through the writings of the upcoming Sunday and then discuss both the background of these readings and their message for us today. This becomes the beginning of my weekly homily preparation.

Starting my homily work with a group of faithful laity helps me go beyond the textbook analysis of a passage. Members of the group readily find application for each Scripture passage. I appreciate this bottom-up homily building. Furthermore, the very purpose of a homily becomes clear, namely, to help articulate the message of the Scriptures for today’s world.

These sessions emphasize that a homily is to be a bridge—a bridge between the message of the Scriptures and their meaning in the 21st century. It’s not that the words of Jesus change, but the way they need to be translated into everyday life always has to be renewed.

One of the finest compliments that can be given for a homily is that the preacher helps the listener deal with current issues in his or her life in the light of the Gospel. Often there is the component of hope even when the readings challenge people to overcome dark forces in their lives.

After the Bible study group has given feedback and shared their thoughts on the readings, there are other opportunities each Tuesday to read the readings aloud, specifically at a Tuesday evening meeting of people participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and during the recording of our weekly podcast. Each time the reading of the passages opens up the central theme a little bit more.

Then comes Wednesday! I call it my day off, and it is a day for hiking (or cross-country skiing, depending on the season), working in my garden or inside the house, and reading. I always keep a notebook nearby. Most of the time, prayerful free-floating thoughts allow me to find the right focus for each week’s homily. By Wednesday night, I know where I am heading.

Both Thursday and Friday mornings are times for detailed outlines of the homily. I may be sitting at a local coffee shop where many people come and go, but for me it is a time to put my thoughts, along with examples and images, into an order that may make sense.

The homily, I have learned, has to provide imagery. Sometimes I feel like I am painting verbal pictures; sometimes a small anecdote does the job. Stories can be very helpful, but I rarely use canned stories. Rather, many of my examples come from the many little events recorded in the journals I have kept over the years. In the midst of all this, I also try out some of my examples on other people, including staff members. Once in a while, I will sell a brief story to someone I trust, asking if it conveys the message I want. And while driving alone, I will recite parts of the homily aloud to see if I can say it as I wish.

Finally, late on Friday or early on Saturday, I type the entire homily, word for word, into my computer. I type quickly as I can, causing me to look for transitions and coherence of message. It often amazes me how some of my best ideas from the outline no longer fit when I write it out. And some very good stories have ended up on the cutting room floor!

By the time weekend Mass arrives, I no longer need notes. In fact, I can stay true to what I have written, guarding myself against any unhelpful tangents.

Even here, however, the homily partnership with the listeners is not over. Since I often celebrate the Saturday evening Mass, I get feedback from others. Since we stream all of our Masses through the parish website, I may watch and critique myself after the evening Mass. There have been some helpful changes made between Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

The Sunday homily does not end on Sunday, however. Through our parish disciples groups and the discussion questions that I prepare for their weekly meetings, the word of God remains a significant part of people’s lives throughout the subsequent week.

Just as people have reviewed the Gospel passage before coming to Mass, they also continue to internalize it throughout the week. My homily is only a part of the total picture.

(Andy Park looks up a Scripture passage during a Bible study at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Parish Bible study groups can help pastors craft their homilies to meet the needs and answer the questions of their parishes.)

Father Joseph Baidoo delivers a homily during Mass at Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Roosevelt, N.Y. Both the preparation and the delivery of each homily have to be taken seriously. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

The homily can be a source of inspiration, or it can be a stumbling block for many in the congregation.

(Catholic New World)
Faith-based book club guides participants to holiness and truth

(Edward’s note: Book clubs that focus on spiritual reading and discussion can help participants grow in their faith. Here is a story of a member of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, shares the impact that reading and discussing faith-based works have had on the group and the members of the group she is part of, the BMV Book Club.)

The BMV Book Club evolved under unique circumstances when a group of friends was formed to discuss a novel that a friend was loaned—a verified-authentic relic of the Blessed Mother. The club, which meets monthly except during the summer months, named itself after the markings on the relic, “Blessed Mary Virgin.” Topics discussed are never limited to religious subjects, as faith-based works have been read to support and encourage members of the group. Questions are shared, and members offer their favorite quotes or inspirational pages. Books are selected based on pastoral recommendations from ongoing spiritual themes. One book, The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis, was a suggestion from Msgr. Joseph Schaedel, the pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, who led the meeting.

The Screwtape Letters was an inspirational book for club member Molly Evans. “After reading this, I can see how today, the evil one is deceiving his way into my entire existence and culture,” she said. “It’s just as timely today as it was when Lewis wrote it.”

The faith-based book club finds inspiration in the inspirational books they’re reading, as well as in the words of Jesus spoken and heard during her life. 

“Sister Schmutzler, who started the book club, noted, “Being with women who seek holiness and truth is a huge blessing.”

The goal is to share the joy of spiritual discussion and as a common resource assists all of us to prepare for book club.

Book club member Beth Wehlage agreed, noting, “I think it is a beautiful way to share our faith and make small communities of like-minded, faithful people.”

Next came a moment I won’t soon forget. The momentum picked up and the opposing team hit the ball back to us, and we barely had a chance to react. Five of our determined fifth graders appeared to have touched the ball before it hit the ground. It was hard for the line judge to determine, so she asked her: “Did you touch the ball?”

The player took a deep breath and looked at the coach, “Yes, I did.” The other team took possession and soon won the game.

She had a way of being authentic and character forming on the court. How easy it would have been to say “no” and get a point to keep the momentum going.

The girls gave their required “good game” hand slap to the opposing team at the end. After talking with the coaches, they returned to their parents when one girl suddenly squealed, “Alexa’s auntie brought cookies!”

They were from a delicious bakery I’d never heard of, and they were wrapped festively with our team colors.

My fifth-grade daughter recently took up a new sport she knows nothing about: volleyball.

She’s playing on a CYO team, along with many other girls who’ve never played the game before. The team had just given her a volleyball. 

On a recent blustery winter afternoon, CYO leaders graciously organized an opportunity for us, the experienced team to play each other.

It provided a chance to learn how the sport works before the first game of the season. Our team was beat four consecutive times that afternoon. I’ve conventionally forgiven the final loss.

The gym was silent with each whistle. The girls gave each other awkward stares and acted frustrated with the space between them. Repeatedly. It wasn’t easy to watch.

Then there were failed serves, time-outs for shoe tying and other newbie hiccups. 

Although the scoreboard indicated differently, we were not entirely defeated that day.

One of our girls finally made contact with the ball. Even though she shanked it, the crowd cheered. “That’s it,” parents yelled.

I recalled how much money we spent that year, but the damage was minimized by stringent building codes.

So when I called the little Catholic elementary school in Anchorage, that my children had attended in Anchorage, I was curious to see how everyone had weathered the earthquake. I called the archdiocese’s Catholic Anchor newspaper on Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 27 to Feb. 2. It quickly became clear that we wanted to boast about Catholic education, my kids’ alma mater’s response to the earthquake.

The quake began just as school was about to open for the day. The before-care students were lined up. Their supervisor quickly had them gather by an inside wall. Aside from broken glass, there was no damage.

I was curious to see how everyone had weathered the quake. I was doing a story for the newspaper. I quickly learned that a small, frightened little kids regrouped in the hallway.

Staff offered calm. Then, from the church, Father, the pastor, his assistant and a visiting priest. Along with them was the parish deacon, himself a dad. Four ordained ministers to console 169 terrified kids: a good ratio.

My friend Lisa has taught first grade at St. Elizabeth for years. In an interview, she told me that when school resumed a few days later, she had a lot of very anxious students. One little girl wore her mom’s school sweater, the note from home explaining, “She wants to have a part of me with her.”

To answer fears, Lisa went to the church and brought holy water for a bowl on her desk.

“Both you feel frightened or worried,” she told her class, “just come up and put your fingers in the holy water, bless yourself, and then you’re safe and that God is in control.”

Some children made several trips to the holy water.

Catholic sacramentals can be powerful, consoling. We are a tactile faith, an earthy faith that uses all of our senses in worship. We consume the body and blood of our Savior. We want the comfort of touch and ritual.

When one of the parents heard about Lisa’s holy water, he posted it on Facebook, with the notation, “This is why I send my children to Catholic school.”

With Catholic Schools Week here, I resent to parents who are fretting over sending their kids to that school. But how, I pondered, could you possibly put a price tag on that?

(Effie Caldarola writes for Catholic News)
As usual for prophets, Jeremiah was, to say the least, not universally popular among his contemporaries. His prophecies drew sharp rebukes. Critics accused him of blasphemy, a crime that had death as its punishment in the Hebrew code of law. (It was this crime that had death as its punishment in the Hebrew code of law. As was usual for prophets, Jeremiah never paused in his prophetic denunciations based on falsehoods, but then Jesus recalled an incident mentioned in the Old Testament in which God showed mercy upon gentiles. This mention of divine favor for anyone outside the chosen people infuriated the audience in the synagogue so much that they tried to murder Jesus. He, of course, escaped.

Reflection

These readings very much put us as humans in our place. It is a place that we do not readily acknowledge. We are quite limited, as a human race, and as individual humans, in our ability to perceive and to judge. Thus it was with the contemporaries of Jeremiah. Thus it was with the people in the synagogue offended by Jesus. We also occupy another place, a place of intimate bonding with Jesus, of receiving eternal life through him. The mysteries revealed in the liturgies of Christmas, Epiphany and the Lord's Baptism proclaimed that God has not left us to our doom. He supplies what we lack because of our limitation. He gives us strength. He gives us Jesus, the light of the world.

As the Gospel says, no one is beyond God's mercy, but we must do our part. With the help of God's grace, we must choose to love others, with love as pure as that described by Paul.

Salvation is not imposed upon us. We must accept Jesus into our hearts. †

Q

Have heard that the “rite of betrothal” is becoming popular in certain young Catholic circles. What does this rite entail? Was it more common prior to the Second Vatican Council? Would you recommend that an engaged couple seek out this rite? (Washington)

A

The rite of betrothal was a little-known but long-standing service of prayer in which a couple had their engagement formally blessed by a priest. The 1906 edition of The Catholic Encyclopedia notes that the ritual was more common in other countries than in the United States. An English version is still available, although not part of the revised liturgy. Father Philip Weller’s translation of the 1962 Roman Ritual (although the rite did not form part of that ritual itself) is still available, as an addition to Father Philip Weller’s translation of the 1962 Roman Ritual (although the rite did not form part of that ritual itself). There is no prohibition against using that rite today, although it has largely been replaced in the contemporary church by the “Blessing of an Engaged Couple” from the Church’s Book of Blessings, published in 1989. That newer rite celebrates in prayer a newly engaged couple and asks the Lord to guide them as they prepare for marriage; it can be celebrated by a priest, deacon or lay minister (sometimes by a parent of the future bride or groom).

It includes scriptural readings—frequently from the 1st chapter of Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (“Love is patient, love is kind …”). An engagement ring may be blessed during the ceremony, and the celebrant prays:

“Lord God, the source of all love, be the wise plan of your providence has brought these young people together. As they prepare themselves for the sacrament of marriage and pray for your grace, grant that, strengthened by your blessing, they may grow in respect for one another and cherish each other with a sincere love.”

The Church also offers “The Order on Blessing of an Engaged Couple” in the appendix of the second edition of the Order of Celebrating Matrimony. I would recommend that a couple use one of these newer blessings.

During the eucharistic prayer, our Diocesan prayers by name both for our current bishop and also for our retired bishop. Yet I have never heard our pope emeritus (Pope Benedict) mentioned during the eucharistic prayer. Is there a reason why he cannot be mentioned along with Pope Francis? (New York)

A

It’s a good question, and I understand the sentiment you express. According to liturgical norms of the Church, neither a retired pope nor a retired bishop is to be mentioned at that part of the eucharistic prayer— the reason being that they no longer exercise pastoral authority.

That question was answered in the March 2013 newsletter from the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship. That article explained that a retired pope or bishop, “while they retain their episcopal dignity and their standing within the order of bishops, they no longer symbolize, express or are responsible for the communion of the local or universal Church.

The same article also permits mention of a retired pope or bishop in the prayer of the faithful or in the “commemoration of the living,” which is part of the four main versions of the universal prayer.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr, Alhambra, New York 12031.)

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in “My Journey to God” column. Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions. Send material for consideration to “My Journey to God,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367 e-mail to askfatherdoyle@gmail.com †
Period of silence in observance of the 46th anniversary of Roe v. Wade

NEW YORK (CNS)—On the 46th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions which legalized abortion on demand, more than 500 people gathered at St. Patrick’s Cathedral to give thanks for the gift of life and pray for an end to abortion in New York.

The Catholic bishops of New York endorsed the 46th anniversary observance of the Roe v. Wade decision as an opportunity to be about the work on behalf of the common good, in particular the protection of the most vulnerable. "Our culture doesn’t understand mercy. It’s from another world. Mercy’s name is Jesus," Father Veras said.

"Let us all pray for the conversion of heart and for the women of our state who are made destitute as a result of such decisions. We are praying that victory will come in the Lord Jesus." 

At the Mass, prayers of intercession were offered for those who celebrate this tragic moment in history. Referencing Jesus’ words from the cross, Father Veras said, "This is a hard night to say, ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do’ (Lk 23:34)." The sermon focused on how, our default leads us in despair, but Jesus comes to us. "... His mercy endures forever," he concluded.

As the worshippers filled out of the warmly lit cathedral into the January chill, Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, superior general of the Sisters of Life, told Catholic Advance readers, "In the early 21st century, you remember that you do love these kids, and now you want to care for them, and you want to help them.""
Father Doug Marcotte believes “there’s no better way to change a community than one small act of kindness at a time.” So the pastor of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Jeffersonville embraced a plan from one of the parishioners to help individuals and families in the community when they don’t have enough food for their next meal.

The parishioner’s idea involved making a “Blessing Box”—a small, stand-alone structure that would be filled with non-perishable food items and toiletries that anyone in need could access at any time of day. The plan would also include placing the “Blessing Box” in a discreet setting on the parish grounds so no one would feel uncomfortable taking items from it.

“Everyone thought it was a great idea,” says Father Marcotte about the parish council’s approval of the plan. “It is an easy way to do one of the corporal works of mercy—to feed the hungry.

One of the things that’s a reality is that there are always people who slip through the cracks. We’re not trying to be a food pantry. We’re hoping to provide for people who need a meal for their family today. It’s a need we regularly experience.”

The “Blessing Box” is one more way to help people in the community. In Floyd County, a county where 12 percent of the population and nearly 16 percent of children younger than 18 year worry about their next meal, the pastor says.

Set up on Jan. 18, the “Blessing Box” was built by a parishioner and has been stocked by donations that include rice, pasta, canned goods, cereal and macaroni and cheese. Personal items such as socks, toothbrushes and deodorant have also been donated.

“People are excited about helping,” says Father Marcotte, who notes that people “often feel overwhelmed by the injustices of the world” that are presented in media reports and social media. “I think it’s important to let people know there’s a way to make a difference. If everyone took responsibility for their neighbors, there wouldn’t be as many problems in the world.”

Students in the parish school are also excited about contributing to the effort, says Father Marcotte, who is also pastor of St. Augustine Parish in Jeffersonville.

“One of the nice things is this is a way everyone can be involved. If someone needs help, it’s available 24/7. And if someone wants to help, they can do it 24/7.

“The Blessing Box is a reminder to people that there’s something we can do.”

Parish opens ‘Blessing Box’ as a gift to people in need

By John Shaughnessy

Bishop tells Covington Catholic High School community he stands with them

COVINGTON, Ky. (CNS)—You could literally hear a pin drop as the faculty, staff and students of Covington Catholic High School waited in the gym on Jan. 23 for the arrival of Covington Bishop J. Funny.

The bishop was there to address the students about the events that took place on Jan. 18, after the national March for Life in Washington, where a student standing face-to-face with a Native American elder was captured on video and ignited a firestorm on social media—making headlines around the world.

Bob Rowe, principal, opened with a prayer and introduced Bishop Foys, who said: “These last four days have been a living hell for many of you, for your parents, for your relatives, for your friends, and it certainly has been for me.”

And the assembly they are “under all kinds of pressure from a lot of different people, for a lot of different reasons.

The bishop then spoke of how impressive the March for Life had been, especially the March for Life at St. Dominic Church in Washington just before the march when he told the diocesan group of students that when they marched, “they represented what was best about the Church and what was best about the Diocese of Covington, that we were sending out our best to stand up for life.

“It was a wonderful day, filled with real grace. That night I slept peacefully. It was the last night I’ve slept peacefully,” he added.

The following morning, he said, he and diocesan staff members began to receive calls and e-mails from people all over the world commenting about the situation. By the next morning, on the diocesan website, he said, was receiving more than 200,000 hits per hour and more than 10,000 e-mails per hour—which crashed servers. Staff phones rang persistently for days until voicemail boxes were full with calls from media or those who wished to comment on what happened.

“Soon, my brother bishops began to text me worrying about my welfare and yours. People care about you. People love and care and are concerned about the Church, and they are concerned about you,” he told the group.

Bishop Foys also spoke about the current investigation into what happened and called it a “no-win situation.”

“We are not going to win,” he continued. “No matter what we say, one way or another, there are going to be people who are going to argue about it, people who will try to get into people’s heads and say, ‘This is what he meant. This is what they meant when they were doing this and doing that.’

“The best we can do is, first of all, to find out the truth, to find out what really went on, what really happened,” Bishop Foys said. “So we do have investigators who are here today—a third-party who are not associated with our diocese, not associated with me or with the school—who are working on this investigation to find out what happened.”

He said as Covington’s shepherd he has to present the facts not only to the diocese but to the world.

“Not the facts that someone has imagined or the facts that someone thinks or facts that people might determine from seeing a video,” he explained. “I encourage all of you, especially the students who were there at the march, to cooperate with the investigators. This is with the permission of your parents.

“We’re not going to have you do anything without the permission of your parents. And the teachers and chaperones who were there, I am asking you, too, to be cooperative with this.”

He said he hoped the students learned that “perception can become reality.”

In my mind with what we saw and what we heard at the time, we had to say what we saw and we meant it. If that behavior is genuine, then we have to condemn it.” He added that a second statement was issued on Jan. 22.

Regardless of what you heard or what you’ve read or what you think, I am on your side. I want you to come out of this in a positive light,” he said.

In the updated diocese statement, he asked people “to pray that we will arrive at the truth.” he said.

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Outdoor altar recalls popular novena

A portable altar for outdoor use appears in this photo taken at the former Monastery of the Resurrection in Indianapolis. The altar was used by the Carmelites for their annual novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which was held on the monastery grounds each July for nearly 30 years, beginning in 1939. Thousands of Catholics moved in 2008 to the campus of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg. The former Monastery of the Resurrection is now the site of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary. (Would you like to comment on or share information about this photo? Contact archdiocesan archivist Julie Motyka at 800-382-9836, ext. 1538; 317-236-1538; or by e-mail at jmotyka@archindy.org.)

In World Youth Day’s ‘Garden of Forgiveness,’ pilgrims find grace

PANAMA CITY (CNS)—As she welcomed World Youth Day pilgrims to the “Garden of Forgiveness,” Eleana Madrid of Panama City said she saw volunteering at the park as “an opportunity to show that God loves us a lot.”

[Jesus] is on the cross because he loves us,” she said. “His greatest gift is he forgives our sins.”

During the “Renew Me” experience, pilgrims were guided through a journey of reflection, confession and celebration. As pilgrims moved past the “Draw Near” section of the garden, where volunteers welcomed them on Jan. 25, they had a moment to stop in the “Review” area to examine their consciences in front of a statue of Mary, as a volunteer played music.

Pilgrim Estefania Villamizar Espinoza, a World Youth Day pilgrim from Colombia, in red, receives a hug from a volunteer after confession in Forgiveness Park in Panama City on Jan. 25. (CNS photo/Jaclyn Lippelmann, Catholic Standard)

Like Mary, be ‘influencers’ for God, pope urges at World Youth Day vigil

PANAMA CITY (CNS)—Although Mary would not be considered an “influencer,” like many social media personalities, she still became the most influential woman in history by trusting “in the love and promises of God, the only force capable of making all things new,” Pope Francis told young people at the World Youth Day prayer vigil on Jan. 26.

“Are you willing to be an ‘influencer’ like Mary, who dared to say, ‘Let it be’ done?” he asked. “Only love makes us more human and fulfilled; everything else is a pleasant but useless placebo.”

During the “Renew Me” experience, Pilgrim Estefania Villamizar Espinoza, a World Youth Day pilgrim from Colombia, was guided to a moment to stop in the “Review” area to examine their consciences in front of a statue of Mary, as a volunteer played music.

“Let it be done!” he asked. “Only love makes us more human and fulfilled; everything else is a pleasant but useless placebo.”

Because, “God walks with us to pour out mercy to the open and well-disposed heart,” the pilgrim guidebook said. “It was really cool seeing all the people [and] how they have it for everyone so they can speak in their own language,” said Brianna Jacobson, a sophomore at Mary’s University in Winona, Minn.

Kirsten Rotz, the campus minister with the group from St. Mary’s, said the experience was “another reminder of the universal Church,” because it is the same sacrament as at home.

“Though she was nervous to go at first, Daisy Avalos, 20, of Houston, said afterward, “It feels like a relief being able to have confessed.”

After the pilgrims received absolution, they walked through the “Rejoice” section, past volunteers cheering “felicitades!” (congratulations). Some volunteers gave the pilgrims hugs, and others took pictures with them to celebrate.

“It is a joy to reconcile with the Lord,” said Miriam Nieto, a volunteer from Panama City. “Some of them come with a broken heart, but after they go to reconciliation, they become a new person. Then we give them a hug to celebrate.”

Meanwhile, near the entrance of the park, the Hindu Community of Panama City gave the World Youth Day pilgrims a broken heart, precision through people’s problems, frailties and flaws, the pope said. Just as he embraced Peter after his denials, Jesus helps Christians stand up when they have fallen, the pope added.

Thanking Martinez for his testimony, Pope Francis said the experience of the young Panamanian shows that, without strong roots that are firmly grounded, “it is impossible to grow.”

Older people, he continued, must ask themselves what foundations they are providing to help young people grow instead of lobbing criticisms against them.

“It is easy enough to criticize and complain about young people if we are depriving them of the jobs, education and community opportunities they need to take root and to dream of a future,” he said.

“Without education, it is difficult to dream of a future; without work, it is very difficult to dream of a future; without a family and community, it is almost impossible to dream of a future.”

Pilgrims pray during Pope Francis’ World Youth Day vigil at St. John Paul II Field in Panama City on Jan. 26. (CNS photo/Jaclyn Lippelmann, Catholic Standard)